



Chapter 1 by Raven Mendax

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Everyone knows the story. It is a local legend, something people recite around camp fires. I know it by heart, and often go over it at sleepovers with my friends. But I never thought, not for one second, that it could be true. And yet here I am, standing with my arm outstretched, obsidian crown clasped in my sweaty hands. Death opens her mouth to speak, but I blurt out words before she has a chance.

"Paper Scissors Rock!" I cry, desperation leaking into my voice. I had thought this over a thousand times, every recital of the story made me more sure of my hypothetical choice. Each game listed required skill, and a knowledge of the rules. But Paper Scissors Rock is just chance. She can't be better than me, or at least, I hope she can't. She raises her eyebrows; It is clear she had not been expecting that. But she accepts all the same, with a hint of a smile. I place the crown on the table, and form my hands into a fist. Death looks down at me.

"You know that if you win, your life will never be the same. It will always, some way, somehow, have to involve this game." Sure of my choice, I nod. Sixteen is too young to go, my whole life is ahead of me, or at least, it will be if I win. We raise our hands, and I take a deep breath in an attempt to calm my rapidly beating heart.

We bring our hands down once, "Paper," begins Death.

Twice. "Scissors."

Three times. "Rock." I spread my hand out wide, forming the symbol for paper. Holding my breath, I look down at Death's slender fingers. They are still curled up into a fist. I beat her. "I must admit," she murmurs, "you're the first." My breath comes out of me in a huff, and I flop back into an old arm chair. Death reaches for her obsidian crown, and places it upon her head. "Well done, Evangeline, but be careful. At some point I will return, make sure it isn't too soon." Nodding my head, I rise from my dusty chair. Death holds out her hand, and I take it, shaking it firmly. "I believe that is your mother," Death says, peering through the window. I turn away to check, and when I look back, she is gone.

I can't believe it.

I am alive.

I beat Death.

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Chapter 2 by Free



If my mother knew I had beaten Death, she wouldn't believe it. As the deadbolt unlocks in the front door, I know I'm not going to tell her.

As it occurs to me that my choice of game was the only thing that earned me another day with my mother, she pushes the door open and steps inside. Her eyes catch mine. "You're still here."

I blink. "Uh, y... yes?"

I think I see her roll her eyes in my direction as she turns towards the next room. "Don't sound so offended, Evie. I only meant I thought you had plans."

Spinning, my mind finally understands her words. "Just dinner with Jen."

She pokes her head back into the room. Despite my decision not to tell her, her ignorance to the fact that I almost died bothers me. "It's just past five now."

"Oh." I have my whole life ahead of me now. My whole life. I have faced Death, yet I still can carry on as normal. In fact, I have to carry on as normal, which means dinner with Jen, even if I don't feel like confronting society at the moment. "I'm going now."

Jen texts me. To my surprise, her brother Grant is coming with us because their parents went out for dinner with another married couple. Grant is exactly one year and one day older than I am.

I get to their house just eight minutes late. Jen greets me at the driveway with, "Grant doesn't want to go to The Spice Room."

"Okay," I say. I'm not up for an argument. I'm not really up for eating either. "Where does he want to go?"

"Pizza Place!" Grant calls from locking the front door and leaning over to us with car keys in hand.

Pizza Place is a slum. "No!"

"I admit the location is less

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"It's pizza!" Jen says. "It's not that great."

"I'd rather go to Spice Room," I input.

"See?" Jen points at Grant. "You're the tagalong. You can come with us to Spice Room or go to Pizza Prison by yourself." She snaps her fingers for the car keys. "But the car is ours."

Grant holds the keys behind him. "That's not entirely fair."

"It's perfectly fair."

"All right," Grant says. "Paper Scissors Rock, then."

My growing sense of normalcy vanishes. I can feel my stare, feeling vaguely disturbed as my brush with Death became real to me again. Paper Scissors Rock?

"No," Jen cuts her brother off.

"Yes. Winner picks the restaurant. It's only fair, since our refrigerator is hollow."

Your life will always, some way, somehow, have to involve this game.

Well. If that meant Paper Scissors Rock was going to frequently appear in my life, so be it.

"Evangeline?" Jen asks. She looks as though she wants to ask what's wrong, but she doesn't. "Do you want to do Paper Scissors Rock?"

The words, "I'm game," come from my mouth before I give myself permission to speak them, and Grant grins. He lifts his fist and palm.

"One-" he says and nods for me to lift my own hand. I do. "Two. Three."

I flash paper. Grant flashes rock.

I laugh as I realize I've won and look up at Grant in time to see his eyes roll back to the whites

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He collapses

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"Grant!" Jen shakes him, trying to wake him up.

"Evangeline! Call 911!" I fumble for my phone. That's when I see her. Everything freezes. Jen is in the middle of shaking Grant, and I could see that she was turning to say something to me.

"I told you your life would always involve the game. You thought I meant the game in general? No. When someone plays Rock Paper Scissors with you, the loser will die." Death crouches next to Grant.

"You never told me that!" I yell, throwing myself in front of Grant.

"When you beat me, I realized something: I. Don't. Like. Losing." She reaches for Grant. Her arm passes through me and touches his cheek.

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